

Tape #307

Henry Schaefermeyer

Interviewed on 5 October 2001 by Kathleen Irving
Transcribed by Kathleen Irving, March 2002

This is Kathleen Irving. Today is October 5, 2001. I'm with Henry Schaefermeyer at his home at 266 N. 500 W. in Vernal.

Kathleen Irving (KI): Mr. Schaefermeyer, I know you came to Vernal from Hayden, Colorado, in 1916. You were 10 ten years old at the time?

Henry Schaefermeyer (Henry): Eleven years old.

KI: When were you born?

Henry: In '06, 1906, the ninth day of November.

KI: Oh, it's almost your birthday then, isn't it?

Henry: It's almost my birthday. I'll be ninety-five years old.

KI: Do you still live here alone?

Henry: Yes, I live here alone. I got up this morning and got my breakfast.

KI: Good. Do you remember the trip when you moved here?

Henry: Oh, yes.

KI: Can you tell me what it was like to travel then?

Henry: Well, we come here in 1916. We come to visit. My uncle lived down to Jensen. He worked at the Dinosaur National Monument.

KI: What was his name?

Henry: William Schaefermeyer. He lived there on the river and we camped there. We come with horses and wagon and we just visited in 1916. But in 1917 we sold everything out in Hayden and we come down here and bought a farm and lived here, out on 1500 West, almost out to the hill on the north side of the valley, out by the Sutherland Ranch and Pardon Dodd's ranch. We lived there and went to school down in Ashley Ward. We went to school in the old white schoolhouse. Have I got that all in here? [He's referring to some handwritten notes.]

KI: I don't remember whether that was in there.

Henry: Well, we went to school in the old white schoolhouse and Tommy Caldwell was the teacher. We went through the Gibson cattle and we had to go on one side of the fence and on the other on account of those cows a-chasin' us. Then when they built the new school down a half-mile east of there...

KI: Was that Union?

Henry: No, Union was down further in Ashley Ward, and this was down, it would be a mile down there. They built a schoolhouse there with four rooms and John Stagg was the principal. We went to school there until, I don't know how many years, I've forgotten. Then we quit there and went to Willcox Academy.

KI: What grade would you have been in? Did you start in the ninth grade in the Willcox?

Henry: No, it was before that. I think I went to school in Uintah High School in the ninth grade through the twelfth. They built the big high school building and we all went to school there.

KI: Was it over by the swimming pool?

Henry: Right where the swimming pool stands now [675 W. 100 S.] We went to school there and graduated right there.

KI: Would you have been one of the first classes of Uintah High School to graduate? I think that the first one was in 1924?

Henry: Right. That would be about right, yeah.

KI: You graduated in '27?

Henry: Yes, I graduated in '27, so that would make me, wouldn't it, tenth, eleventh and twelfth? yeah.

KI: Do you remember any of your teachers there that you especially liked?

Henry: Yes. Ruby Harris, she was there. She married a Morrill from Tridell. He taught there, too. They were both single and they got married. She was a nice teacher.

KI: What subject did she teach?

Henry: English. Well, she taught two or three. I don't know what the others was. Then Marshall, I can't remember his first name, he taught French. French, is that what the Mexicans speak?

KI: Spanish.

Henry: Spanish! He taught Spanish and we took Spanish class. Arithmetic... I don't remember

who taught arithmetic.

KI: Did you ever get into any trouble when you were in high school?

Henry: No.

KI: No pranks or anything?

Henry: Well, we got into a little trouble.

KI: Like, what did you used to do?

Henry: (Laughs) The year we was in the twelfth grade, we beat a basketball game and the whole school turned out and went downtown. Paxton was the principal and when we come back up to school, why he expelled the whole bunch of us: the president of the high school and everybody, so we didn't have any president the rest of the year.

KI: Why did he do that?

Henry: Well, because he was mad because we sluffed school and went downtown to kick off a big deal 'cause we'd beat the basketball game.

KI: I bet you weren't doing anything too bad down there, were you?

Henry: No, no, we didn't do anything bad. Vera Calder was Pontha Calder's daughter and she was president of the school. Reed McConkie was president of the twelfth grade when we graduated, Reed McConkie.

KI: Do you remember what you were doing downtown?

Henry: We just went down there and sang songs and kind of celebrated because we won the game, we won the state.

KI: Did you graduate with Ken Sowards?

Henry: No, I was way ahead of Ken.

KI: Way ahead? Because he told me his class had also won the state championship. That's why I asked.

Henry: I was through school then, when they did that. But we won it back then.

KI: That's when the whole state played together, too, wasn't it? You played with schools from all over the state, not the way they do it now.

Henry: I don't think so. I don't remember. That was quite a long time ago.

KI: What kind of places did you like to go when you were in high school, when you went downtown? Was there a confectionery or an ice cream shop?

Henry: Yeah, there was a confectionery, an ice cream shop, run by Calder Brothers. Then later on, Alexanders took it over and run that.

KI: Is that where the kids liked to hang out?

Henry: That's where they kind of liked to hang out, yeah.

KI: Where there any movie theaters?

Henry: Yeah, there was the Vogue Theater, where the Vernal Drug moved in about... what? I don't know what year it was, but they moved in the theater, the Vernal Drug did, because the other place wasn't large enough for them.

KI: What kind of movies did you used to see? Did they used to have newsreels?

Henry: No. Mrs. Emery Johnson played organ in the theater all the time the show was a-goin' on. The picture was black and white in the Vogue Theater and that was the only one.

KI: Did they talk? Was this before they talked in the movies?

Henry: No, they talked, but she played the organ, too. I don't know. They didn't mix it up. I just don't know how they run it now. I've forgotten.

KI: So, you went to Willcox for a while. Did you also attend Kingsbury Community Church?

Henry: I did. The old church. We went to school in the old brick church. Went to church in the old brick church and went to school. My wife taught me, I don't know what grade it was now, I've forgotten what grade it was, but she taught me one year in school. Reverend Downey was the reverend and he was the principal of the school and we had teachers from the east come there to teach. There was Miss Tiffany, and we called her Miss Alvareda, and Miss Alice, Byron Thomas.

KI: Was Rhoda DeVed's mother there at the time?

Henry: No, she didn't teach at that time.

KI: Stonecypher was her last name. You don't remember her?

Henry: I remember her, but she didn't teach in the school that I remember of anyway.

KI: She may have come before.

Henry: We rode horseback from home down there to school. It was four miles. We rode a horse. We never was late for school. We was always there on time, even if we rode horses. My sister, she stayed with R.H. Ratliff and worked for her board.

KI: Now, Ratliff lived up here. He lived in town, didn't he?

Henry: Yes, he lived here, across from the Episcopal Church, and she stayed there and went to school.

KI: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Henry: I had two brothers and one sister. There was four of us in the family. We raised a truck garden to live on in the summer. In the wintertime we didn't have any income. We didn't have much money. We used to go for a dance for fifty cents, up in Maeser. We went in the old church house in Maeser.

KI: Do you remember Imperial Hall?

Henry: Oh, yes. We used to box. Byron Thomas taught boxing when we went to the Willcox Academy and I was quite a boxer. Around 1924 or '25. With Elmer Jewett and Duane Martin, and there was another one of the Martin boys. I can't remember his name, but he used to box. And Elmer Jewett. They was in the livery stable and they sold out and they moved out on the ranch, out where Davis Merkley lived.

KI: Did they have dances at the Imperial Hall, too?

Henry: Oh, yeah. Boy, yes, we used to dance. Then, jumping quite a ways, why, we had a Kadoodlers orchestra in the Lions Club and we played there in the Imperial Hall a lot of times.

KI: So, you played with the Kadoodlers?

Henry: I played the bones.

KI: Did you?

Henry: Yes. And we had quite an orchestra. We went to Salt Lake and they put us in a little room in the Newhouse Hotel for the dance, because they thought we was a bunch of bums and we started to playin' and before we played very much, why, the whole hotel come and tried to get in that room and there wasn't room for them to dance, so they put us over across the hall in the big dance hall and we played for them and they really had a good time. We had a donkey and she had a little one. We left her in the truck down on the street and then brought the little donkey up and took him in the room with us where we was a-playin' and he would bray to her and she'd bray back. Everybody would just yell! We had quite a time.

Along with that we had a state convention in Brigham City and we went to Brigham City and played out on the street for the program and then played for the dance, in Brigham City. We had offers from all over the western states to come and play for them, but, of course, it was all businessmen.

KI: Was everybody who played with the Kadoodlers a member of the Lions Club?

Henry: Yeah. Ray Stringham, he was the leader in the band. He played the accordion. Hap (?) Weist played the banjo. I can't remember his name, from Roosevelt, played the accordion. Manfred Campbell played the accordion and played the piano. Ken Stringham played the drums.

KI: How do play bones?

Henry: Didn't you ever see them?

KI: I'm not sure I did.

Henry: Well, I'll show them to you before you leave. I've still got them.

KI: It's percussion? To keep time?

Henry: Yeah. You play with them. Put them between your fingers, then play with them and twist your arms and rattle the bones. Everybody liked to hear that because it was pretty good. I played those bones... When we went to the high school, to Uintah High School, we played the bones. One of Ben Kelly's girls played them, too. We played together when we went to school. I'm still playing that same set of bones that I played when we was in high school. I've still got them

KI: Did you ever have a marching band when you were in high school?

Henry: No, no, we didn't.

KI: I heard that some time later they had a marching band.

Henry: They did have marching band in the high school, but I wasn't in that.

I've got pictures of where we hauled dirt around with a dump wagon and a team. We hauled dirt around the schoolhouse, the high school, when they built it. They didn't finish it up and so the kids had a number of teams and we hauled dirt to put on the south side of the building to raise the ground up, so they could plant the lawn. I've got pictures of that.

KI: It was pretty good work for you guys to do that.

Henry: Yeah.

KI: You married Helen in what year?

Henry: 1934.

KI: Did you have any children?

Henry: No children.

KI: So, you and Helen did a lot together, didn't you?

Henry: Yes. In the late years, I've prett' near give a fortune away in money to the Boy Scouts and to the indigent children up in Maeser. I give \$10,000 to the University and I bought the Chamber of Commerce building for the Chamber of Commerce. I paid \$75,000 for that and gave it to the Chamber of Commerce and it's called the Schaefermeyer Building today.

KI: I read that you built playground equipment.

Henry: I built all the playground equipment that went to Merkley Park. Then when we had to leave Merkley Park, when they took it away from us and we went down to Remember the Maine, we had to do it all over again.

KI: That was with the Lions, wasn't it?

Henry: That was the Lions Club, yeah. I built all those swings and my wife and I hauled them up there and set them up, those swings. Then when we built the pavilion, why, the Lions Club built that, and I'd retired out of the garage and I worked there. We built that whole pavilion, and run the water over to it.

Then in later years, we built another pavilion down south of that one, across the road. I built all that railing around the driveway. I done the welding on all that railing, put that all in. Done a lot of work for the Lions Club.

KI: Did you learn how to do that from your father, who was a blacksmith?

Henry: No, I don't know how I learned. I guess when we had the garage. We had the Chevrolet garage from 1936 to 1945, Basin Chevrolet. We sold it in 1945.

KI: When you first graduated from high school, you went to work for Harmon Sowards, is that right?

Henry: No, there was three years in there that I didn't. I graduated in 1927 and I went to work for Harmon Sowards in 1930.

KI: Do you remember what you did during that time?

Henry: No, I don't. I must have helped out on the farm or something. We worked for Ira Burton and the Dodds family, putting up hay. Then we went to Deep Creek and put up hay and I must have done that during that time.

KI: What did you do for Harmon? You went to work for him when he had Continental Oil.

Henry: Yes. I run the delivery truck. One month during that time, I don't remember what year it was, I made thirty round trips to Price in one month. I went out there after 411 gallons of fuel in the delivery tank and two barrel on each side and four ten-gallon cans on each side. We filled that with gas because we could haul that much.

KI: Then you just delivered to retail outfits?

Henry: Yeah, we delivered to retail.

KI: You worked for him for how long?

Henry: I worked for him for six years. Then we bought the Basin Chevrolet.

KI: Then you sold cars?

Henry: Yeah, we sold Chevrolets. We bought the garage from N.J. Meagher and T.G. Alexander. They got mad at us and they wouldn't even come and take the inventory. But finally, N.J. come and took the inventory.

KI: Was the Chevrolet dealership across the street from the bank?

Henry: Yes. From the Bank of Vernal, across the street.

KI: On South Vernal Avenue.

Henry: Yeah. We stored cars upstairs and the ramp is still there. We went up that ramp and stored cars up there at night, when it was cold.

KI: Were those just cars anybody could park there when it was cold, you mean? Or were these cars you were selling?

Henry: No. Well, we stored our cars up there, too, some of them. We stored some of them down below.

KI: But you stored cars for other people when it was cold?

Henry: Yeah, we stored cars. A lot of them stored their cars in the daytime to keep them from being so hot. They stored their cars in there in the shade.

KI: Kind of like a parking garage?

Henry: Yeah. We had, I think, five mechanics: Henry Pahacek, Ace York, Jess York, Mick Batty

and then we hired two or three fellows at different times from Price and Salt Lake. We had a bigger number of people working for us then than what they've got in any of the garages today. We had a lot of business.

KI: Was Cobble Rock station there then?

Henry: Yeah, the Cobble Rock station. Then the Woodard Building caught on fire, on one Sunday. We was on the mountain and we saw the smoke from up on the mountain and when we got to town, they was a-haulin' all of our parts up to the Red Front Garage, Tucker's Red Front Garage. They hauled our parts up there because they thought it was going to take that whole block. They dumped our parts out of the dump truck on the floor and we had to sort them all out. Ace sit there for, I guess, four months and sorted those parts all out for the different years of cars and one thing and another.

But we made it good. When we was Meagher's, the first six months we was there, we was only there six months in that building because it caught on fire and they moved us out... Well, I hadn't better tell that story.

Anyway, we had to borrow \$1000. So, the first six month we was there they hadn't been selling any cars at all and Chevrolet didn't want them there any longer, so they canceled them. Helen was bookkeeping for them and they let us have the agency. We sold so many cars in the first part of 1936 that we run out of money, because we only had \$1500 to start with. We wanted to borrow \$1000 and we went over to Meagher and he wouldn't loan it to us, and then we went across to the Uintah State and he just shoved a note out to us and we signed it for six months and we paid it off in three. I've never had to borrow a dollar since.

KI: Can you remember how much cars cost when you first started selling them?

Henry: Well, a Chevrolet pickup sold for around \$600 and the passengers sold from \$700 to \$800 and they had a master and a standard car. I had two kinds of cars.

KI: What's a master?

Henry: Master was a little car, a littler car than the standard.

KI: They were all standard transmissions, though, weren't they?

Henry: Yeah, they was all standard transmissions.

KI: So, when you say standard, you just mean it was a standard size and master was a smaller size?

Henry: Yeah. Master was the bigger car, the little car, it had a name, but I can't remember.

KI: Have you always driven Chevrolets?

Henry: No. In 1950, well, I'll start out a little before that. We sold out the garage in 1945. I don't know what I did the first year. When we sold it out, we thought we had enough money to retire

and found out we didn't. So, we went back to work. I went to work for the Forest Service and so did Helen. She worked there for I don't know how many years, and I worked for Hotel Vernal. When they built Hotel Vernal, I was the timekeeper and I worked for the architect, because he was from Salt Lake, and Mr. Ashton. Forrs was the contract for the hotel and I worked for him. Art was his son and he stayed out here and he was the boss, but Forrs wanted somebody to kind of look after him because he was just a young fellow when he was building the Hotel Vernal. I worked there for two years, building Hotel Vernal, and they all thought I never would leave, that I'd stay right there for the rest of my life, but the day we opened it up and had our opening, the next day we left and went to Yellowstone. My wife and I went there on vacation.

KI: So, what year did it open?

Henry: 1947.

KI: Okay, so you hadn't gone to work for the Forest Service yet.

Henry: No, I worked two years for the Forest Service. They just hired me in the summertime and in the spring of 1950 I went to them and asked them for a job and they said they'd give it to me, but I'd have to wait a while before I could go to work. So, I started a junkyard here at home and Helen didn't like that much, so she went down and talked to Mr. Cheney and asked him what he thought about it. He said, "Wonder how Henry would like to go to work for us?" So, in 1950 I went to work for the bank and I worked there. They sold out in 1947 for First Security, then I worked for First Security. I worked there for twenty years. Then I got awful tired of it.

KI: What did you do for First Security?

Henry: I was the appraiser and the loan officer. I did both.

KI: Did you appraise homes?

Henry: Yeah. I appraised everything, from homes to cattle ranches and machinery. That's when they opened the oil field and we had lots of oil field machinery financed.

KI: So, you didn't like that too much, huh?

Henry: Yeah, I liked the job, but I got tired of it. Then I stayed another ten years doing their flunky work, drilling safety deposit boxes and making an appraisal when they needed one.

[Side two of tape.]

Henry: I didn't like him, so I quit drilling safety deposit boxes and ten years later than that, in 1980, I quit working for them entirely because they had some people there I didn't care for, like the manager and Sergeant was there. Well, we got along pretty good with the manager, but it just got to be kind of a rassel and I retired, I quit. I did retire then.

KI: So after that what did you do to keep yourself busy, because I know you kept yourself busy.

Henry: Oh, yeah. I worked around here. I made windmills, like that one out there. That was the first one I made, right there. I never would sell it. I had a thousand chances to sell it, but I wouldn't sell it and it still runs like a charm, still running.

KI: What do you do with the windmills? Do they create power or are they just to look at?

Henry: It's just to look at, just ornament. I bought windmills from Ohio and I sold them. I sold most all of these small windmills that's in the valley. I sold most all of them. But I retired.

KI: Tell me about your rodeo experiences.

Henry: Well, in 1946, after we sold the garage, Helen and I was the president of the rodeo in 1946, and we rode in the rodeo. We always had horses; we always had matched horses and we used to take the prizes for years. We'd take the prize on matched horses in the rodeo and the parade. We had two palominos. Everybody will remember them that went to the rodeo in those times.

KI: What were their names?

Henry: Trudy and Rocket. Yeah, you couldn't tell them apart down in the field. I couldn't tell them apart down there until they come up closer to us because they looked just exactly alike. They was palomino. But we had sorrel horses before that.

KI: Did you keep them here on your property?

Henry: Yes, we had this property here. We bought it from J.K. Bullock.

KI: How long have you lived in this house?

Henry: In this house? We built it in 1947.

KI: Just after you sold the garage?

Henry: Just after we sold the garage.

KI: Then you have the back acres here?

Henry: Yes. And the old schoolhouse is still out here. I never touched it. Carl Sowards and Elva Eaton was married and they lived out here after that. They lived out there in that old schoolhouse, then they bought a house. Instead of this living in the schoolhouse, they bought a house. But it was here when we bought. We bought this acre of ground first and then we bought the nine acres on the outside from J.K. Bullock.

KI: What's inside the schoolhouse? Was it two rooms or just one?

Henry: Just a one-room schoolhouse and it's still just like it was when we bought it, only I've got it full of storage stuff, saddles and tents and bicycles and a little bit of everything.

KI: I read somewhere that you and Helen used to square dance with your horses.

Henry: We always square danced. The Uintah Riders. We squared danced for a number of years, I guess. We'd go down to the fairgrounds and practice and square dance on our horses.

KI: Is it hard to teach the horses to do that?

Henry: No, we didn't have any trouble dancing. We had three squares of horses.

KI: That sounds like fun.

Henry: It was fun.

KI: When you square dance with horses, and you say you have three squares, does that mean that there are just four people or are there eight people on eight horses?

Henry: There was eight people in each square.

KI: That really does sound like fun.

Henry: We had lots of fun. We square danced for the rodeo on our horses. We square danced all over the western states, really. We went out on Lookout Mountain for ten years. We could look right down State Street from up on the mountain, up on Lookout Mountain. We could look right down out of the dance hall, right down State Street. We enjoyed that. We sure had a lot of fun square dancing. We danced in Rawlins and Riverton, Rock Springs and Green River. We danced at the fair in Salt Lake. We danced in Provo. We danced in Spanish Fork. We danced everywhere, Grand Junction. We went down quite a lot because we like all those people from Grand Junction and quite a number of us would go down there and dance.

KI: When you were involved in the rodeo, did you ever do any of the competitive events?

Henry: No, I never done anything competitive.

KI: But you did a lot of organizing?

Henry: Yeah. We brought Kirby, the year we was president of the rodeo, we brought Kirby in here with livestock. Up until that time, they used local livestock. We didn't want to use local livestock. We got Kirby to come and bring his stock in.

KI: From where?

Henry: I don't know where Kirby come from now. I've forgotten, 'cause I haven't seen them or talked to them since. But they still get Kirby livestock in here some years at the rodeo.

KI: Have you seen the rodeo change a lot?

Henry: Oh, yeah.

KI: When you first started was it mostly just local people who participated in the rodeo?

Henry: Yeah, it was probably all local people when they first started.

KI: That's not what happens now, is it?

Henry: The rodeo grounds and the fairgrounds was over where the hospital stands now. That was the fairgrounds. Then the old Uintah Railroad, north of that, was all pasture and they used to pasture their horses in there, when they hauled the freight in from Watson.

KI: I didn't know that. I know where the Uintah Railway building is. The city offices were in there once.

Henry: Well, the one where McNaughtons lived, I think, was the same old building where the freighters used to stay all night, where the McNaughtons lived. Down there by the Utah Power.

KI: It's fun to hear those stories.

Henry: Yeah, well, I never quit talking.

KI: But I like that. That's good. Can you tell me about some of the businesses that you remember downtown? You told me about N.J. Meagher and the two banks.

Henry: Yeah. Coopers owned the drugstore, and Mrs. Cooper, she always sold the tickets and Mrs. Johnson sold tickets.

KI: Tickets for what?

Henry: For the show house. Then the John W. Pope building. He sold Star Cars and T.G. Alexander and his family run the café over there, that Calder Brothers was running, they bought that from him.

KI: Do you remember the Pig Stand, that used to be where the 7-11 Café is right now?

Henry: Oh, yeah! The Pig Stand. They had a little old, eight by eight place out there where they sold hamburgers. The 7-11 started to selling hamburgers, Belcher, he started to selling hamburgers there. Right where it is now. Then they built a bigger café and kept a-getting a little

bigger and a little bigger until they were what they are today.

KI: How about the Co-op Building? Was the Co-op running when you were a young boy?

Henry: The Co-op was a co-op and then it went to J.C. Penney, but the Co-op was there and the owner of it was.... I'm sorry I can't remember their name. They lived right over here, south of us, on the corner. What was their name?

KI: Maybe you'll think of it in a minute. And you remember Ashton Brothers?

Henry: Ashton Brothers, yeah. Some time along, I don't remember what year it was, Everett Alexander and I hauled groceries in for Ashton Brothers and lumber for their lumberyard, Everett Alexander and I, and I don't know what year that was, I'm mixed up. I done too many things then. But I never had too many jobs in my life.

KI: Which of your jobs did you enjoy the most?

Henry: Really, I enjoyed the Forest Service, the two years I worked for the Forest Service. We rode horses from here to Moon Lake, rode the telephone line and took out all the old connections and put in mitro (?) clips on the telephone line where they used to just fold them together. We worked on that, then we rode from here to Bridger Lake and done the same thing, Rulon Bullock and I, in those two years that I worked for the Forest Service.

KI: Did you like being outside?

Henry: Yeah.

KI: What was it like when you went to Yellowstone Park? When you went up there, did you go in a touring car or did you take your own car.

Henry: We took our own car in 1934 when we was married. We took our own car and we went from here and we stayed in Jackson Hole. We stayed in Jackson Hole the first night we left here. But the funny thing of it was, we was married at 6 o'clock in the morning. We'd done so much shivaree-ing on the other kids that was our age that got married, and had parties and one thing and another. So, we was afraid to get married in the daytime or at night, so we was married at six o'clock in the morning, then got in the car and started for Yellowstone.

KI: Where did you get married? With a justice of the peace or with your minister?

Henry: Yeah. I can't think of the minister's name that married us.

KI: Was it at the church or in one of your homes?

Henry: We got married at the Hemstreet home.

KI: That was your wife's maiden name?

Henry: Yes.

KI: Where did they live?

Henry: They lived just north on the old Daniel's ranch, a half mile north of Vernal on 5th West, and that's where we was married.

KI: That's pretty early in the morning to get married.

Henry: Yeah. Well, Chuck Henderson was running the Cobble Rock Service Station and we went down to his service station and I told him he could kiss the bride and he jumped in the air and he was going to chase us! We started out and went up over the mountain and they never could catch us. We was too fast. We had a new car.

KI: That sounds like a lot of fun to do that. They don't do much shivaree-ing these days.

Henry: No, they don't do much shivaree-ing, but we did then. Did a lot of it. They had dances, a lot more than they do today. In the old Imperial Hall.

KI: You were just trying to keep the bride and groom apart, weren't you?

Henry: Yeah. Got them in a wheelbarrow and wheeled them around town!

KI: Do you remember any of the bars that were downtown?

Henry: Yes, I remember them. After we sold the garage, James Hemstreet and Hatch, I can't remember his first name.

KI: Was it N.S.?

Henry: No, he come later. I can't say his name. He was the crippled fellow that walked in short steps. A lot of the older people wouldn't know him. I can't say his first name. They run a pool hall after we sold the garage, James Hemstreet and him.

KI: Where was it?

Henry: It was right in there where George Ross' cleaning place was, right across the street from the café and right next to that garage.

KI: Which street was that then?

Henry: That was on Vernal Avenue.

KI: South Vernal Avenue?

Henry: South Vernal Avenue. I don't know. He was in there a couple years or something. I don't know what he done after that. Oh, him and Don Richardson sold bread, and he sold bread.

KI: That's a very big career change, isn't it? Pool hall to selling bread.

Henry: Yeah.

KI: It is interesting that people from your generation were able to get different jobs without having to go to college to get a degree, before you could get into a bank, for example.

Henry: Well, I graduated from high school, was all the education I had. When I went to work in the bank, Mr. Cheney said I was honest and he said, "You stay honest while you're working for us." And I did. That's the reason I got the job in the bank with him.

KI: That would make all the difference in the world, wouldn't it?

Henry: Yeah.

KI: Is there anything you'd like to tell me about that you especially remember about your life. Can you think of anything that you really enjoyed doing?

Henry: Well, I enjoyed everything I did. I worked in the garage. I started out in 1936 and worked there for ten years, and then for Hotel Vernal, worked two years a-building that. Then went two years for the Forest Service, then went to work for the bank. That was about all the people that I worked for in my life.

KI: How long were you a member of the Lions Club?

Henry: I have 28 years of one hundred percent attendance. I went to Lions Club for 28 years and never missed a meeting.

KI: You did a lot of public service work during that time.

Henry: Oh, yes. We did a lot of public service work, Helen and I both.

KI: Helen was a member of Lady Lions?

Henry: Yes, and she was president of Business and Professional Women.

KI: Were you involved in any other clubs? Did you ever join the Chamber of Commerce:

Henry: Oh, yeah. I joined the Chamber of Commerce and the Lions Club in 1937, and I'm still a member. I'm paying dues to both of them to this day.

KI: Do you ever go to the Chamber anymore?

Henry: No, well, no. I haven't been able to the last two years. I've been sick for two years. I don't know what happened to me 'cause I never was in a hospital bed until then. I was 93 years old before I was ever in a hospital bed.

KI: That's great. You're doing pretty well then. I think you've answered all my questions and I appreciate it very much.

Henry: Well, I didn't figure on telling you the whole story, because I thought we could take this [his notes] and do it, but I've told you a lot of things that ain't in this here.

KI: Yes, you have, and I appreciate it because there's nothing better than hearing it in your own voice.

8 October 2001

Kathleen Irving with Henry Schaefermeyer at his home, discussing Vernal's volunteer fire department.

KI: I'd like to know about the fire department that you joined in 1937. Was it the first fire department they had here?

Henry: No, they had a fire department before that. They had one that was out behind the Co-op and where the bell was. They had a bell out there and they'd ring that when they had a fire.

KI: How could you hear the bell?

Henry: Oh, we could hear it. It was a big bell. I don't know where it ever went to. We could hear it around town anyway.

KI: What happened when you heard the bell ring? What would you do?

Henry: Well, we wasn't there very long when that all happened. We soon after that got a siren and put it on top of the Uintah Railway building. Uintah Railway. Yeah. Well, it wasn't long that we went over there for a fire department. We didn't have the one we have to run with and pull.

KI: What kind of a fire truck did you have?

Henry: We didn't have a fire truck. We had a steam engine that they pumped water with. We didn't use that because it was wore out.

KI: Where did you get the water? Did they already have fire hydrants downtown?

Henry: They had fire hydrants downtown, come down from Ashley Canyon in an old wooden pipe.

KI: The first fire department was on the east side of North Vernal Avenue and then you moved over to where the old city office building was in the freightway building?

Henry: No, it was on the west side, behind J.C. Penney.

KI: Okay. That's where the freightway building was where you put the siren up?

Henry: Then Vernal City took that building. I don't remember what year that was, but it wasn't long after I joined the fire department.

KI: Did you have a lot of training to be in the fire department?

Henry: Well, we didn't have much training then. We just fought fires, just done it automatically, I guess.

KI: Can you remember when they finally did get a fire engine? Do you remember what it looked like, what kind it was?

Henry: Yeah. We had, well, I think it was a Buick, but it was an open top. It didn't have any top on it. It was an open fire truck. It finally wore out until every time we used it, we had to take it back to the garage and put oil in the pumps, so that it would prime the next time we wanted to use it. Then we got a new truck, in about 1938, I think. In 1938 we got a GMC truck.

KI: It was just one truck that you guys had?

Henry: We just had one, and that was a small truck, just a ton and a half truck. We fought fires with that, but it was a good one. Finally, it ended up in Manila and it's still over there.

KI: Oh, is it? After that, what did you have?

Henry: Well, they bought a GMC from—I hope I'm telling you the truth—from Colt Jeffries, when he was in the garage, and that would be, I don't know what year it was, then we kept on getting new trucks until we finally got up to where we've got four fire trucks now.

KI: Who would pay for those trucks? Was it city money?

Henry: Vernal City and Uintah County. It's a Vernal City-Uintah County Fire Department.

KI: What kind of fires did they used to have when you first started? Were they mostly in businesses or homes?

Henry: Well, the old Cannon factory, it burned.

KI: It was owned by Cannon?

Henry: The Vernal Milling and Light Company, their elevator burned. We had a fire in the bowling alley, it burned, the first bowling alley.

KI: Where was that?

Henry: Right where it is now. They just redone it, rebuilt it. I couldn't tell you what year it was; I image 1950 something.

KI: What would start these fires? Was it faulty wiring?

Henry: I don't dare tell you.

KI: It's okay. It's not going anywhere. Did you have arson problems?

Henry: Yes. I can't remember his name where we had the fire. When Pope was fire chief. I was fire chief for ten years and I don't remember the years it was, I got mixed up and couldn't remember. I can't remember his name where we had the fire down on First North. He tried to burn it up so he could collect the insurance and Mr. Meagher was in on it, too. They had a trial and sent him to the pen and Governor Blood pardoned him while he was standing in the door of the prison. When he went to go to prison, he never did go inside the prison. Blood pardoned him when he was standing outside. I can't remember his name. But it was about 400 East on First North.

KI: Just lots of different reasons, I'm sure, that fires happen. Did you also work on some type of search and rescue? Did you save people from these fires?

Henry: Yeah.

KI: Can you remember a time when that happened?

Henry: No, I can't remember a date.

KI: Well, not a date, but can you remember the event?

Henry: When we went to the search and rescue, Fletcher was the sheriff, and he's the one that organized it. There was about twenty of us, I imagine, that was charter members of the search and rescue.

KI: Can you remember someone you rescued, what happened when you were involved in rescuing the person?

Henry: Well, we went to the mountain a time or two to find somebody that was lost and we also

went out on Willow Creek. There was a boy that was not just right, and he went out there with his dad. They went out after a load of wood or something. He walked off and he couldn't find him, so they got the search and rescue to go out there and we took our horses and went out there. He had walked about five miles. He stopped along the trail and built little piles of dirt, so we tracked him. Les Thacker and I took our horses and went out.

KI: Was that a good feeling to find him?

Henry: I don't remember who found him, but search and rescue found him. He was sitting up on the side of a hill under a rock and they went up there and got him. He was scared. He was scared of them because he wasn't just right. They got him and brought him down and brought him to his father. I don't remember his name.

KI: That's okay. Do you remember a time when you rescued someone from a fire?

Henry: I don't think we ever got anybody from a fire.

KI: That's good. At least nobody was in one.

Henry: I can't remember it if we did.

KI: How far did the fire truck go? Were you able to go up into Maeser and out to Jensen?

Henry: Oh, yes. We went out to Jensen and over to Lapoint and Randlett.

KI: Quite a ways then. Why did you decide that you wanted to be a member of the fire department?

Henry: Well, they just had a volunteer fire department and I was one of those guys that wanted to work.

End of tape.